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Making an Impact on Out-of-School Time

**A Guide for Corporation for National Service Programs
Engaged in After School, Summer, and
Weekend Activities for Young People**

**Prepared by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time
for the Corporation for National Service**

June 2000

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Created in 1993, the Corporation for National Service gives more than a million Americans opportunities to improve communities through service. The Corporation supports service at the national, state, and local levels, overseeing three main initiatives:

- AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs and, after their service, receive education awards to help finance college or training;
- Learn and Serve America, which helps link service and education for students from kindergarten through college; and
- The National Senior Service Corps, through which Americans fifty-five and older contribute their skills and experience.

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For the past twenty years, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), formerly known as the School-Age Child Care Project, has successfully brought national attention to the importance of young people's out-of-school time by influencing policy, increasing standards and professional recognition, and spearheading community action aimed at improving the availability, quality and viability of programs serving children and youth. NIOST's varied initiatives have moved the field forward using four paths: research, education and training, consultation, and program development.

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PREFACE

In September 1998, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women signed a cooperative agreement to serve as a training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National Service. This agreement enabled NIOST to offer the following resources to Corporation programs working with out-of-school time programs for young people:

- Regional training and networking events around the country for Corporation for National Service staff from all streams of service
- Targeted local training events
- A toll-free hotline to handle information requests
- Phone consultations and advice
- Tip sheets and packets of information on subjects relating to out-of-school time issues
- A peer advisory network offering advice and support

Through these activities, NIOST learned a great deal about the ways that Corporation for National Service programs are affecting young people's out-of-school time. NIOST also learned about the types of information and training materials that were most helpful to Corporation programs involved in activities for youth.

The content of this guide is a compilation of input and ideas from Corporation programs around the country, NIOST research and training materials, and the knowledge and experience of writers and contributors. Special thanks goes to all those who contributed ideas and experiences at Corporation training events conducted by NIOST, the program directors and coordinators who were interviewed for the program profiles section, NIOST senior staff who offered support and guidance, and all those who helped compile, review, and edit this manual. The primary author from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time was Saren Eyre Loosli, M.Ed.

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The Purpose of This Manual

As Corporation for National Service members and volunteers become increasingly involved in out-of-school time programs for youth, their need for knowledge about effective practices for running programs and working with young people must be met. *The purpose of this manual is to help Corporation programs become more effectively involved in enhancing the quality of out-of-school time programs for young people ages five to fourteen.* This manual offers ideas and suggestions, resource lists, tip sheets, and examples of successful programs. Many of the materials in this manual are designed to be easily used to conduct training for members and volunteers.

The Audience for This Manual

This manual is designed for Corporation for National Service directors, program managers, trainers, team leaders, and other staff as well as members and volunteers who wish to enhance the quality of young people's out-of-school time. It is also intended for use by non-Corporation out-of-school time program providers who are working with Corporation programs.

Use Of This Manual

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Section One

Exploring the Facts about Children's Out-of-School Time

What is an “Out-of-School Time Program”?

The term “out-of-school time program” (OST program) encompasses a wide range of program offerings for young people that take place before school, after school, on weekends, and during the summer and other school breaks.

Quality out-of-school programs provide a variety of enrichment activities that:

- keep young people safe
- provide opportunities for positive and consistent relationships with adults and peers
- offer time for physical recreation and unstructured play
- promote development of skills and exploration of interests
- enhance positive character traits and life skills
- help strengthen academic skills

Why are Out-of-School Time Programs Important?

There is a great and growing need for quality out-of-school time programs for America's young people. Youth spend only 20% of their waking hours in school. On average, public schools meet for six hours per day, 180 days per year. This leaves 185 days and many hours each day free for young people to be bored or lonely, get into trouble, or participate in meaningful and fun activitiesⁱ. What young people do with the hours that they are not in school has an obvious impact on their development and well-being.

In the past few decades, changes in the social and economic fabric of our country have led to important changes for families. Because children's primary care-givers are increasingly required to work full-time outside the home, a large percentage of young people are in need of a safe place to spend their non-school hours while their parents are at work.

- Today, less than 15% of the nation's young people live in a household with a working father and a “stay-at-home” motherⁱⁱ.
- Eight million young people ages five to fourteen are in need of care during their out-of-school timeⁱⁱⁱ.

Exploring the Facts

- According to a recent survey, 85% of registered voters believe that it is difficult for parents to find after school programs for their children in their communities^{iv}
- The General Accounting Office estimates that in the year 2002, the current number of out-of-school programs for school-age children would meet as little as 25% of the demand in some urban areas^v.

Young people without adult supervision are at significantly greater risk of truancy from school, stress, receiving poor grades, risk-taking behavior, and substance abuse.

Those who spend more hours on their own and begin self-care at young ages are at increased risk of poor outcomes^{vi}. The juvenile crime rate *triples* between the hours of 3:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M.^{vii} and young people are most likely to be victims of a violent crime committed by a non-family member during these same hours^{viii}.

As well as providing safe places and adult supervision during non-school hours, out-of-school time programs can offer young people opportunities to:

- explore their interests
- play
- participate in sports and recreation
- develop social skills
- do homework
- strengthen academic skills
- participate in meaningful service projects and other activities that help them build positive character traits and a sense of civic responsibility

How Can Out-Of-School Time Programs Benefit Children?

According to research done in support of the Presidents' Summit on America's Future, held in Philadelphia in April 1997, young people need five resources in order to be successful:

Resources Needed by Young People

(As defined at the Presidents' Summit)

1. An ongoing relationship with caring adults -- parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches
2. Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours
3. A healthy start and future
4. A marketable skill through effective education
5. Opportunities to give back through community service

Out-of-school time programs can offer young people all of the resources suggested by the Presidents' Summit:

1. Quality programs help young people develop meaningful relationships with adults and with peers.
2. They offer safe places where youth can explore their interests, enjoy time with friends, and participate in both structured and spontaneous activities.
3. OST program staff can watch out for health and safety issues affecting young people and offer referrals to families. Staff can refer families to organizations that can help them learn more about nutrition, wellness, effective parenting techniques, behavior disorders, stress, substance abuse, and child abuse.
4. Youth can develop hobbies, hone their academic and social skills, and explore their interests with the help of an effective out-of-school time program.
5. Young people in out-of-school time programs can participate in service-learning projects, help each other, and learn to be contributing members of a community.

Research has demonstrated that quality out-of-school time programs positively impact young people's lives in the following ways:

- Young people who are under adult supervision, in programs or at home, have better social skills and higher self-esteem than their peers who are unsupervised after school ^{ix}.
- Youth who attend high-quality out-of-school time programs have been found to have better peer relationships, emotional adjustment, grades, and conduct in school ^x.
- Teachers and principals report that students become more cooperative, learn to better handle conflicts, develop an interest in recreational reading, and receive better grades due to participation in quality after-school programs ^{xi}.
- Young people who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities are 49% less likely to use drugs and 37% less likely to become teen parents than students who do not participate in extracurricular activities ^{xii}.
- Youth who attend OST programs spend more time in learning opportunities and academic and enrichment activities, and spend less time watching television than their peers ^{xiii}.

What Types of Out-Of-School Time Programs Currently Exist? How Are They Funded?

In response to the needs of youth and families, out-of-school time programs have been established by schools, community centers, churches, and nonprofit agencies such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs. Almost 30% of public schools and 50% of private schools offered before and/or after school care in 1993-1994, as compared to only 15% and 33% in 1987-1988 ^{xiv}. Many programs have a particular focus such as tutoring, arts, sports, or service-learning. Other programs offer young people a broad range of activities. Most successful programs offer many choices about how participants spend

their time as well as a safe and healthy environment where they are regularly supervised by an adequate number of caring and well-trained adults.

An estimated 39% of elementary school children in grades Kindergarten through third grade (6.1 million children) receive some form of non-parental care before and/or after school on a weekly basis. Of this group, 17% are cared for by relatives, 14% attend center-based programs, and 10% are cared for by non-relative paid caregivers ^{xv}. Unlike preschool-aged children, school-age children typically attend more than one after-school program or activity in the course of a week. The 1990 National Child Care Survey -- the most recent information available -- found that over 75% of elementary school children with employed mothers participate in at least two different arrangements ^{xvi}.

Out-of-school time programs are funded in a variety of ways. Some programs receive grants and/or subsidies and are offered at no cost to parents. Many charge parents a fee. Fees range greatly. Some subsidized programs charge parents on a sliding fee scale based on family income while others charge a set fee. Fees for programs range from \$2.41 per hour in Minnesota to \$4.70 in New Jersey ^{xvii}. In Fiscal Year 1998, 1.5 million children received subsidies for child care from \$3.5 million of federal funds (Child Care Development Block Grants). Of those receiving subsidies, 35% were between six and thirteen years old ^{xviii}. Operating costs of many programs are offset by funding from nonprofit agencies, funds allocated to public schools (such as Title One) or federal grant funding. In the past four years, the Federal Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program has increased funding from \$1 million to \$450 million nationally and provides funding for after school programs at approximately 1600 public schools in 471 communities across thirty-three states ^{xix}.

How are Corporation for National Service Programs Helping to Meet the Out-of-School Time Needs of Young People?

All over the country, Corporation for National Service programs are making an impact on the way that children and youth spend their out-of-school time and the quality of the programs they attend. Increasingly, Corporation programs are placing members and volunteers in OST programs as tutors, child/youth supervisors, mentors, and activity leaders. In some cases, members and volunteers are starting new programs. In other cases, they are enhancing programming and improving the child-to-adult ratio of existing programs. There are countless stories of Corporation programs successfully partnering with other organizations to meet young people's out-of-school time needs. Involvement of members and volunteers can be observed in every stream of service* and every type of out-of-school time program. Some examples of this involvement are offered in the following text box:

* The Corporation for National Service has three main "streams of service": AmeriCorps (including AmeriCorps*VISTA, AmeriCorps State and National Directs, AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps), National Senior Service Corps, and Learn and Serve America. See the Corporation's website for more information (www.nationalservice.org).

Examples of Involvement of Corporation for National Service Programs in Children's Out-of-School Time Activities

- RSVP volunteers lead special interest clubs based on their hobbies and former professions at an elementary school's extended day program.
- AmeriCorps members expand a one-hour after school tutoring program into a full-afternoon program offering sports, special interest clubs, recreational reading, and service-learning as well as tutoring.
- A university with a Learn and Serve America grant staffs a new summer program for children with well-trained and enthusiastic students who get college credit for designing and implementing service-learning activities.
- To improve the quantity and quality of facilities available for out-of-school time activities, AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) members make repairs, do renovations, and construct Teen Centers at Boys and Girls Clubs.
- An AmeriCorps*VISTA member works to increase parent involvement, bring in more community volunteers, and obtain in-kind donations of supplies from local businesses for an after school program at a local Boys and Girls Club.
- City Year AmeriCorps members run a Saturday program called "Young Heroes" for middle school youth that offers them opportunities to participate in a mayor's youth council and plan and implement their own community service projects.
- A university with a Learn and Serve America grant staffs a new summer program for children with well-trained and enthusiastic students who get college credit for designing and implementing service-learning activities.
- In a program that has traditionally been recreation-focused, Foster Grandparents add a one-on-one reading component to help struggling readers.
- An elementary school with a Learn and Serve America grant starts an after school community service club with the help of AmeriCorps members.
- AmeriCorps*NCCC members work with the local police department to combat crime and gangs through setting up after school and summer tutoring, recreation, and arts programs.
- Foster Grandparents regularly conduct a special story time for children at "village houses," homes in the neighborhood where children can go after school.
- An AmeriCorps*VISTA member recruits, orients, and coordinates Federal Work Study students from local colleges and universities to serve as America Reads and America Counts* tutors at an after school program.

Specific, detailed accounts of how several Corporation for National Service Programs are involved in out-of-school time programming can be found in the "Program Profiles" section of this manual (Section Seven).

* Go to www.ed.gov/americanreads or www.ed.gov/americancounts for more information on these programs.

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ⁱ *The Future of Children*, 1999; Miller, 1997

ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, 1996

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^{iv} C.S. Mott Foundation, 1996

^v U.S. GAO/HEHS, 1998

^{vi} Dwyer, et al., 1990; Pettit, et al., 1997

^{vii} Fox and Newman, 1997

^{viii} Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1996

^{ix} Witt, 1997

^x Vandell et al., 1996

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